

Reclaim Education

Notes on the global student movement

Massive Movement for Free Education in Chile

Just like pretty much everywhere around the world people in Chile have been resisting the increasing privatisation and commercialisation of education for the past few years. In this context a new massive movement evolved across Chile during the past two months.

Since the "return of democracy", the Chilean Education System has been based on a law (LOCE), which was created by Pinochet's economists, the "Chicago Boys". Since then education has been totally polarised between public and private education. Consequently there is education for the rich people on one hand and different education for the poor on the other.

In 2006, a great student movement ("La Revolución Pínguina"), put an end to this law. But the political coalition called "La Concertación" (consisting of political parties ranging from the "Communist Party" to the "Christian Democratic Party"), educational corporations and right-wing parties created a new Law (LGE), that was mostly the same as the old one. This was a huge set-back for the student movement.

This year most university students (2006 was a mostly public school movement) are trying to bring back a new movement, but with the direction of the JJCC ("Juventudes Comunistas", Communist Youth) that are part of "La Concentración". Therefore these protests are more to be under-



stood as a reaction to the ruling right-wing government (first one since the military coup).

The Federation of University Stu-

dents of Chile (CONFECH) consists of all the student federations at each university put together (FECH, FEUSACH, etc...).

There is a fundamental discussion going on about the real representation this confederation has, because their formal demands are very different and not very clear, in comparison with the more local discussions and demands (in general,

FREE EDUCATION is the demand at the base assemblies, while lower costs (without explaining how much) is the primary demand of the CONFECH).

Looking at the current situation and the whole context, there are various possible outcomes. The movement can overcome their leaders, and try to stand with their real demands, or, it could be the end of the movement, with the discussion of more patch solutions, like more scholarships and a reduction of the credit tax (instead of fighting the logic of the destructive credit system within education, because it's a right, not a privilege).

June 2011 saw dozens of huge demonstrations for free education across Chile. Schools and universities have been occupied and the whole education system pretty much paralysed.

On June 1st about 25,000 students protested on the streets of Santiago. Many of them clashed with riot police that used water canons and batons against the activists. Some were arrested. By June 13th more than 80 high schools were squatted by students. On June 16th more than 100,000 students, pupils, lecturers and parents joined a massive demonstration in the capital Santiago. Another 100,000 took to the streets in other parts of the country. One week later almost 10,000 students protested in the capital once again and clashed with riot police. Several activists were detained. On June 25th more than 1,000 students staged a mass performance of Michael Jackson's Thriller in protest over higher education in Santiago. The biggest education demonstra-

About this newsletter

This newsletter is part of the communication infrastructure of the independent platform "International Student Movement" (ISM). The ISM is being used and shaped by education activists and groups around the world who are struggling against the increasing privatisation of public education and for free emancipatory education for all.

This newsletter is the result of voluntary work done by a few individuals who are passionate about the cause. The positions expressed are not in any way representative for any group or the "International Student Movement" as a whole.

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tions for the past few years took place on June 30th with a massive strike and demonstrations in various cities across Chile; 120,000 protesters in Santiago, 30,000 in Concepción, 20,000 in Valparaíso and 15,000 in Temuco. All together about 300,000 people took to the streets across the country. Thirteen students were arrested during clashes between riot police and protesters in Santiago.

For more details and lots of videos: www.ism-global.net/videos_chile

Brutal Crack-Down on Student Protest in Kerala (India)

Students were attacked during a protest against the Kerala government's policy regarding admission to private medical colleges and increasing commercialisation of education



on June 29th. At least 26 students, two of them seriously, and five police officials were injured. Students were about to remove barricades outside the state secretariat. When the police caned them, they retreated into the compound of the Uni-

versity College. Students began to throw stones, while the police used tear gas and entered the campus. This is the second time in less than a week that police used force to tackle

student protests. The students say that the management of private colleges was given a free hand in the admission process. The protest march was organised by the Student Federation of India (SFI).

Call for Feedback:

Uniting in our Struggle Globally in November 2011?

During the last Global Chat Meeting (June 12th), which was joined by about 30 activists around the world, the participants decided to publish the following call and invite to another Global Chat Meeting on July 31st to discuss the feedback.

We suggest coordinating actions in our struggle against the increasing commercialisation of education and for free emancipatory education on

the global level together for November 2011. We suggest using the International Joint Statement, which is currently being endorsed by close to 80 groups in 30 countries, as a content basis. So instead of creating a new one we encourage everyone to support and help to re-circulate the already existing one. Nonetheless everybody is free to initiate an alternative statement, of course. Further-

"Los Indignados" Reclaim Syntagma Square in Athens

Mass protests and general strikes have invigorated Grecians and brought the country's wheels of commerce to a grinding halt. Syntagma Square, in Athens, has been occupied for nearly two months, with protesters calling for an end to sanctions forced on them by the IMF and their own government. Two recent days of General Strikes, called for June 28 and 29, left thousands of Greek residents broken and bloodied, but they came out victorious after rebuilding Syntagma Square and continuing the fight for justice.

The sight in the square was something I had to see for myself during a recent trip to Athens. Syntagma Square has become its own tent city complete with chemical toilets, a media center, yoga workshops, information booths, a kitchen, trash pick-up, and emergency services. It's enough to make any activist proud.

Squares and streets throughout Greece continue to fill with people

searching for change, though mainstream media typically reports only the most violent of these activities. Reports from protesters maintain that both uniformed and undercover police officers make up much of the violence, with police using expired and prohibited tear gas on protesters.

Every Sunday evening at 9PM general assemblies are held. The democratic process is in its most pure state here, since everyone who wishes to speak has at least 1.5 minutes to do so. After that, the audience may hand-signal that the speaker's time is up, at which point the speaker may or may not continue speaking. Essentially, how long the speaker stays on the microphone is up to the hundreds of people (from children to the elderly) sitting or standing in the crowded square. Majority rules. Resolutions are proposed and voted on by the masses, and the minutes of the meetings are recorded and put on the Internet that same evening. The collective

voice guides the direction of the movement in Athens, but everyone is heard. I admit I could not understand a word of the all-Greek proceedings; unfortunately I am a typical monolingual United States citizen. However, the energy and the passion for life and change exhibited by the shouting children and old women banging on cooking pots, is a universal language. (So for the English updates, I go to this site: www.metamute.org).

The brave and democratic measures continue in Greece, Spain, Germany, and all over the world. The actions of these dedicated masses have brought hope and vigor to those who hear about them, including those in the U.S. A.. People's Assemblies are beginning to spring up around the globe, and they need to start appearing in the U.S. A.-- if they can maintain a truly democratic process without being co-opted. That is always the challenge.

more, we suggest calling for a global day of outrage for free emancipatory education on November 17th, 2011. We call on all peoples' assemblies,

groups and networks identifying with our struggle to discuss this idea locally and give feedback to everyone on the ISM platform.



Alternatives, such as a Global Week of Action (Nov.14-20th) or a Global Month/Wave of Action, should be considered as well.

One important question is how we can connect the different activities worldwide as part of the Global Day/Week/Month/Wave of Action better. Everyone is asked to think of

ideas on this regard. A Special Chat Meeting to coordinate common actions based on the feedback from peoples' assemblies, groups and networks around the world is scheduled for July 31st, 2011 at noon EST/ 4pm GMT/ 6pm CET/ 9.30pm IST on ism.speege.com.

Feedback can be given through the ISM (global) mailing list (international_students_movement@lists.riseup.net) and be posted inside the forum: www.ism-global.net/coordinations_nov2011 Questions? Suggestions? Contact: united.for.education@gmail.com.

★ one world - one struggle ★